

HELPS TO GOOD TEACHING.

AFTER two or three years there comes a time to most teachers when the work seems less interesting, or at any rate when greater effort is needed to rouse an interest in it. There have been several articles in our Magazine urging us to keep the keenness and enthusiasm for our work, with which we left Ambleside after our training course. Many of us who are in connection with active branches of the P.N.E.U. are helped very much by the lectures and the discourses which generally follow—we feel we are part of a living and growing Society. But those ex-students who are in the country or in towns where no branches exist, miss such helps, and hardly know how to supply the need they feel. The very fact of exceptional training is apt to prevent much intercourse with “unbelievers” which would be of real value.

The House of Education training has not brought us to the stage when it is impossible to learn more—rather the very essence of it is to make us feel that there is always something, just beyond our reach perhaps, well worth striving for. Every new pupil brings us face to face with fresh mental conditions, which must be tackled in such a way as to insure the best possible results. Perhaps for a year or two we can stand the constant drain on our resources, give out of our best and still feel we have something in reserve; but it is true that, sooner or later, the earnest and enthusiastic teacher begins to find the work, which she still loves, rather wearisome. The feeling is sometimes due to despondency and almost invariably causes it. Such a state of mind ought to be avoided, and in order to avoid it we must try to find out the causes. These may be various: bad health, over-strain, etc., but one quite as important and more often overlooked is mental stagnation. Teachers are so apt to become dogmatic, more especially those generally known as “governesses,” for they are always in a position of authority—they must always be prepared to decide if a thing be right or wrong, and are always more or less on a pedestal. Holidays, of course, bring a little respite,

but they are not enough—just as rest is not necessarily to be gained by doing nothing, so a right mental balance cannot be insured unless more positive means are employed.

The point to be emphasized is this: that no one ought to teach for any length of time without also learning. It does not very much matter what is the subject taken up; circumstances must, in most cases, decide that. Many ex-students have joined the “College by Post,” but for those who can attend classes the personal contact with a teacher has great advantage over mere correspondence work. Surely all of us know the restful feeling of having *taken in* something after listening to a good lecture. The value of reversing the mental attitude cannot be estimated too highly. Many teachers think it wise to limit the time of remaining in one post. The need for this may exist when the position of the teacher is in a school where she has one particular class to teach, the work remaining practically the same, while the pupils change; but in our work it is a very different thing. Our pupils develop, and the work has to be ever growing to meet their requirements. If the work is to grow in value it is essential that the teacher should keep an open mind, and should herself be constantly growing.

Another point is that we are apt to think our pupils can understand what we have taken pains to explain to our own satisfaction, and perhaps rather resent that they should show misconception and forgetfulness later on. If we ourselves are doing work that really entails effort on our part as strenuous and continued as we require from the children, it stands to reason we shall be more sympathetic with their difficulties. Surely all parents, however great the demand they make on the time of resident teachers, could be shown how much it is to the ultimate advantage of their children that the teacher should have enough time for private work *in addition* to preparation. In many cases, even given the time, there are no opportunities for other than correspondence work. But for all those who live near London there is every facility. Classes, covering a large range of subjects, are organized in connection with Polytechnic Institutes and South Kensington; then courses of lectures followed by classes are held wherever a University Extension Centre exists, and these often rouse a desire for reading some valuable books which might not otherwise have come to the student's knowledge.

Again, if no classes can be followed for want of time or opportunity, a Reading Circle is a possibility in the most quiet places.

The National Home Reading Union is arranged to suit the wants of every class of reader. A small number of members is required to form a Circle, but individual membership is also possible; a magazine is issued monthly, containing helpful notes on many of the books suggested for reading; a list of books to be read in the various courses is published at the beginning of every session, and from this the "Circle" can make selections. There is a Botany Club also, notes of which come out in the magazine. Miss Mondy, the secretary, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C., is most kind in helping with the formation of new circles.

In the January, 1899, issue of our Magazine there appeared a short account of the summer holiday spent under the auspices of the National Home Reading Union. These annual meetings, and those of the University Extension, which are held in the summer holidays alternately at Oxford and Cambridge, ought to appeal to all teachers. It would be most delightful if a number of students could arrange to attend these courses together. Expenses can be considerably reduced when several combine, as a reduction is then made on the tickets.

Many complaints are made by isolated members of our Association about the want of unity amongst us, and there is much reason in these complaints. The carrying out of some such suggestions as are made in this paper would not only prove helpful to teachers who have their work at heart, but would also afford that very bond of union which many of us so earnestly desire.

E. M. F.

THE COMING CENTURY.

CHARACTERS.

OLD CENTURY.	SPECIMEN CHILD.
NEW CENTURY.	FRENCH MAN.
SPECIMEN MAN.	FRENCH LADY.
SPECIMEN LADY.	

SCENE I.

A Cave in Cloudland. The Old Century discovered warming her hands over the fire and looking anxiously at the clock.
(Time : Dec. 31st, 11-30 p.m.)

SOLO Air, "When I was Young."

Here by my old hearth-stone
I, sad and all alone,
Sit while the hours move on
In merry throng.
I, too, have had my day;
Work, trial, fun, and play —
All things were good, they say,
When I was young.

Then I did wake to hear,
Under my window near,
The Mail horn sounding clear
Or watchman's tongue.
Now all these have passed by,
List to the engine's cry —
Noise enough to make me fly
If I were young !

Nay, nay, let no regret
Make these dull eyelids wet,
Nor alway memory set
Grief in her song.
The coming times shall bring
Every good and useful thing
Promised vaguely in the Spring
When I was young !